



An Awkward Time Of Night



👁 59 ✓ 26 ★ 19

Chapter 1 by N. Adaire

Harry always felt like he was the only one that saw this time of night. Of course he knew that this wasn't true, but the fact that he always found himself on his own seemed to speak volumes.

He would never quite be sure whether his attempt to sleep would be met with success, so he would more often than not try to find something to distract himself. Sometimes there would be something interesting on the television (although the definition of the word 'interesting' would often be looser than at other times of the day). He might attempt to read something.

On this night, that ever-present source of distraction was his focus. Laying atop the sheets of his bed, he tapped his way through a few of his more regularly visited websites on his phone.

Distraction from this distraction came in the form of a message:

Chapter 2 by Kitiōn



The message coming in on his mobile read " If your one of those people who find it hard to sleep at night, then just text YES, and you can have the solution of your dreams". Harry paused for a moment & became curious, and then gradually his thumb began to hover over the touch screen.

Chapter 3 by Luke Meyers



Typing the three letters, he pressed "send." With astonishing alacrity, another message popped up. How had it responded so quickly? Harry was no technological wizard, but he knew these things usually took at least a moment. Reading the message, his brow furrowed further

"Thank you! HARRY WILSON, A See more of Story Wars and immediately to assist you!"

The moment he finished reading the message, a door

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Chapter 4 by dalazee



For a moment Harry just lay there, his head turned towards the door.

'Should I get up?' Should I just pretend not to have heard?'

But, 'I am curious'? Who could it be? What could it be?

The knocking sounded again. Louder, more insistent.

Knock.

Knock.

Knock.

Harry swung his legs over the side of the bed and in that instant, the decision was made.

The door would be opened.

On the other side a figure was standing in the middle of the hall way.

Tall. Wearing a black wide-brimmed hat, which covered the face in shadow.

Dressed in a long black coat. Collar turned up. Reaching all the way to the floor. It was impossible to tell if the figure was male or female.

Chapter 5 by intellikat



"Harry Wilson?"

The voice was soft and indistinct. Harry was only growing more intrigued by this late-night appearer and so he decided to welcome what may come. He embraced this night's mystery with wonder. Not fearfully... but as a child does, with even graceful naivety.

"Yes, I'm Harry Wilson." He opened the door wide and allowed the figure to stride in with its tall boots and cat-like movements. "Should I call you?"

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"Hans," the figure suddenly

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"Oh shit," thought Harry, but suddenly the figure's voice changed again.

"Or Veronica," it said in a purring tone. "If that is more to your liking." The figure touched his arm reassuringly. Do not worry, Harry Wilson. I am programmed to respond to your desires and wishes even before you know them yourself. Just relax and enjoy yourself tonight." The figure removed its long coat and hat and threw them onto his couch. "Is this your first time with an adaptoid?"

Chapter 6 by Janet Karkis



Harry's chest pumped hard in his chest. With eyes wide open he stumbled backwards; tripping over his shoes, he fell with a dry sound on the carpet and kept moving away from the creature who was still walking towards him.

The man-looking thing waited until Harry reached the wall and started taking his coat off, he crouched slowly and Harry closed his eyes, moving his face towards the wall hoping to disappear. He felt hot breath on his face and then a laugh, full on belly laugh.

Harry opened his eyes and looked at the creature that had fallen to the floor laughing until it couldn't breathe. The creature was a teenage boy, maybe a few years older than his big brother. The boy sat in front of him, drying some tears from his eyes.

"I really am Hans" with happy brown eyes and a big cheeky smile Hans offered his hand. Harry looked at him for a second, still unsure and a little annoyed he shook his hand. "Harry Wilson" Hans' smile grew "You have been recruited by the Nigh Owls Army".

Chapter 7 by Dana Busby



"Should I know what that is?" asked Harry nervously.

"Not yet, but I bet you know more than you think, " said Hans.

Harry was certain he had never heard of the Night Owls Army.

"Does your father sleep?" asked Hans offhandedly.

"Of course my Dad sleeps!"

"Are you sure? When have

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"Um. Well sometimes on Sundays he takes a nap after reading the paper," replied Harry.

"Ha! No he doesn't. He PRETENDS to nap. Harry, what I am about to offer you is incredible. We waste so much time sleeping. Members of Night Owls Army know that with twice the awake time, we can be twice the men we would be otherwise."

All this talk of being a "man" made Harry rather nervous. He liked being a teenager; he liked having next to no responsibility.

Hans continued, "The initiation is in two days. At that time you will have to make a choice: join us and be more than you are, or not."

Chapter 8 by intellikat



Harry was getting just a little bit annoyed by how this whole episode was playing out. Only a few moments before his curiosity had been piqued by the oddity of a sexually-ambiguous or -morphable creature in his presence after-hours, but now he was entertaining some joker who was spouting nonsense and grinning like a certifiable jackanape.

Harry yawned. "What exactly does is this initiation all about?"

"I'm glad you have asked Harry, Wilson. An initiation is the action of admitting someone into a secret or obscure society or group, typically with a ritual."

"I know what the word means," said Harry, looking for his mobile phone to see if any other messages had come through. "I'm asking you what the Night Owl's initiation is about."

"Wonderful! An intelligent lad like yourself will progress swiftly in the Army."

"Don't call me lad."

"Yet as I said, I know what you want even before you do. And it is to be a secret soldier in the Night Owls Army, as well as to be called lad."

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visitor began to laugh. "I am not a THING, Harry Wilson, I am the solution of your dreams."

"Look, that doesn't even make any sense. A dream can come true. But it doesn't require a solution. A problem requires a solution. And to be honest, you are kind of becoming a problem, Hans."

"Would you like to hear about the Night Owls Army initiation process, Harry Wilson, lad?"

"Holy Cripes. Yes, that's what I asked you, Hans."

Harry Wilson threw himself back onto his bed as Hans sat down in a corner chair and began to drone on about the history of the Night Owl's Army and about how important it was to keep the Army's secrets absolutely secret. This was why the initiation process was an essential step in the process of recruiting new members, and Harry needed to understand the grave seriousness of the initiation before embarking upon it. Harry rolled his eyes and tried to count the cracks on the ceiling.

"We are told that the act of initiation supposedly serves a deliberate purpose, of building solidarity," continued Hans. "Psychologist Robert Cialdini uses the framework of consistency and commitment to explain the phenomenon of hazing as part of the initiation rite, and the vigor and zeal to which practitioners of hazing persist in and defend these activities even when they are made illegal. Cialdini cites a 1959 study in which the researchers observed that 'persons who go through a great deal of trouble or pain to attain something tend to value it more highly than persons who attain the same thing with a minimum of effort.' The 1959 study shaped the development of cognitive dissonance theory by Leon Festinger."

"Hey Hans," interrupted Harry. "Do you think you will be finished describing the initiation in the two days before it actually happens?"

"Yes, yes, lad. Of course. I continue. Beyond a legal approach, eliminating or lessening the dangers of hazing requires an understanding and application of psychological and sociological

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produce conformity among new members. Hazing could also increase feelings of affiliation because of the stressful nature of the hazing experience."

Harry Wilson felt his eyes begin to flutter. Before he knew it, he was fast asleep and snoring.

Hans heard the snoring coming from the bed and paused in his speech. He lifted himself gently from his chair and walked toward the sleeping boy. Standing over the vulnerable Harry, Hans cocked his head to one side and lifted his smartphone. He took several snapchat pics and then smiled to himself. Then he dialed a number in his contacts and lifted the phone to his ear.

A pause.

"Did you see the pictures?" Hans spoke to someone on the other end. "He looks so peaceful and content." Another pause. "Very good. I will do that."

Hans replaced the phone in his pocket and leaned in close to Harry's face.

"Sweet dreams, Harry Wilson."

Placing a business card on the boy's chest, Hans turned and departed just as mysteriously as he had arrived.

On the card, written in simple block letters were printed the words:

"HANS/VERONICA"

REPRESENTATIVE #57

ADAPTOID SLEEP SERVICES INC.

'We don't sleep until you do!'

the end

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